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UNCLAS BUCHAREST 001567

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EUR/NCE - WILLIAM SILKWORTH
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SUBJECT: ROMANIAN EXTREME NATIONALIST PARTY NEWSPAPER
PRAISES WWII DICTATOR FOR "SAVING" JEWS

REF: BUCHAREST 1348 (AND PREVIOUS)

1. (SBU) The headline of a first page article in the July 12 "Tricolorul," a daily newspaper controlled by extreme nationalist and Greater Romania Party (PRM) leader Corneliu Vadim Tudor, declares that World War II-era fascist dictator Ion Antonescu "saved the lives of at least 600,000 Romanian Jews." The brief article, accompanied by a color photograph of Marshall Antonescu in a uniform that apparently includes a German Iron Cross decoration, purports to cite distinguished Romanian writer and philosopher Emil Cioran. The article quotes Cioran as writing that "Perhaps Antonescu was crazy, but...he saved the lives of at least 600,000 Romanian Jews. Not a word of recognition, no monument, no street in Israel mentions his name." (Note: Cioran was associated with the ultra-nationalist Iron Guard in his youth but later renounced the organization and apologized for his engagement in extremist politics. End Note.)

2. (SBU) Comment. Antonescu's signing of deportation orders and active collaboration with the Nazis during World War II directly contributed to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Romanian Jews and Roma. Although Tudor has mounted a superficial attempt over the past two years to portray the PRM as a mainstream center-right party and himself as a "philo-Semite" (Ref), "Tricolorul's" front-page paeon to fascist dictator Antonescu illustrates the viewpoints of what many view as the "real" Vadim Tudor. The article may also reflect a conscious attempt by Tudor, whose party faces declining poll ratings and recent defections, to shore up his support with extreme nationalists, the PRM's most hardcore supporters. In December 2004, former President Ion Iliescu awarded Tudor the "Star of Romania," one of the country's highest accolades. The current government has not revoked the award, although an independent commission has been set up to review all recipients of the medal in past years and, according to sources in the Romanian president's office, has authority to revoke awards. End Comment.

3. (U) Amembassy Bucharest's reporting telegrams are available on the Bucharest SIPRNET Website:
www.state.gov/p/eur/bucharest.
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